

# B-1 bomber proves combat capability



**2nd Lt. Elizabeth Campanile**  
Dyess Public Affairs

*(Editor's Note: This is the last in a four-part series highlighting the 20th anniversary of the B-1 at Dyess. This week's article focuses on the combat uses of the bomber.)*

Before the B-1 ever saw combat, the bomber battled to prove its value.

However, the bomber's advanced technological capability and usability was concentered when it quickly made a name for itself during Operation Desert Fox, Operation Allied Force and later in both Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

"A lot of people really didn't think the B-1 would perform well in combat at first because it was so maintenance-intensive, but all of the conflicts – Desert Fox all the way to OIF – basically proved that wrong," said Major Derek Leivestad, 28th Bomb Squadron instructor pilot.

In December 1998, the B-1 was used in combat for the first time during Operation Desert Fox.

The bomber swiftly penetrated Iraqi air defenses to destroy Republican Guard barracks.

Operation Desert Fox was the first chance the bomber could val-

idate its conventional role and its ability to operate in a force package, but it did that and more.

The next time it was used in combat was in 1999 in Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. In that conflict, the bomber flew only two percent of the total sorties but dropped more than 20 percent of the total tonnage. A total of six aircraft was used in Operation Allied Force.

Its near-precise weapons aided in the conflict and accounted for the bomber's extraordinary mission effectiveness rate, which denotes how many sorties or missions an aircraft flies out to do and accomplishes.

"The mission effectiveness rates for the B-1 were in the high 90 percents for all the conflicts it supported, which was unprecedented; and nobody believed the B-1 could do it," Major Leivestad said.

Once again the bomber proved itself in OEF. B-1s dropped 40 percent of the weapons and 70 percent of the precision-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions weapons.

The bomber accounted for only five percent of the strike sorties that bombed in Afghanistan.

In OIF, the B-1 once again demonstrated its nearly excep-



Courtesy photos

The B-1 Lancer has released a flare, a defensive countermeasure, while dropping Mk-82 2,000-pound general purpose bombs. The bomber can currently carry 24 GPS-aided JDAMS at one time or a combination of 24 Mk-84 2,000-pound general purpose bombs; 8 Mk-65 naval mines; 84 Mk-82 500-pound general purpose bombs; 84 Mk-62 500-pound naval mines; 30 CBU-87, -89, -97 cluster munitions; 30 CBU-103, -104, -105 WCMD; 24 AGM-158 JASSM or 12 AGM-154 JSOW.

***"A lot of people really didn't think the B-1 would perform well in combat at first because it was so maintenance-intensive, but all of the conflicts – Desert Fox all the way to OIF – basically proved that wrong."***

**Major Derek Leivestad**  
28th Bomb Squadron instructor pilot

tional mission effectiveness rate capability and dropped 22 percent of the guided weapons but flew only one percent of the combat sorties.

The bomber proved itself useful in combat so much that after

Operation Desert Fox, the bomber was already in high demand. And since OIF, it has also been dubbed the "MVP" (most valuable plane) of OIF, Major Leivestad said.

"Right now we're the big kids on the block because of what bat-

tlefield commanders are saying now, 'If the plan doesn't involve the B-1s, I don't want it,' Major Leivestad said. "Basically, what has happened is the B-1 has proven in OEF and OIF the value of our capabilities, what we can do and what we can bring to the fight."

"But that just goes to credit the maintenance folks that were out there turning wrenches and loading the bombs and everything. Those guys performed phenomenally," he said.

And as Dyess commemorates the B-1s 20th here, Dyess salutes the B-1 and all the people who make and have made the bomber what it is now.



## The B-1 Bomber

# Bone

*Continued from Page 1*

Once they arrived on scene, the joint terminal air controller reported friendly forces were taking fire from a building located in the center of the compound, and that Army soldiers had encircled the complex at a range of just 300 meters.

Because the friendlies were positioned in a 360 degree circle around the target, the crew could not safely drop their bombs without putting coalition forces in danger.

The crew notified the JTAC on the ground of the situation and offered to pass the support back to the two A-10s that had finished refueling and were now over the area.

However, the ground forces declined and requested the presence and firepower of the B-1. The ground commander then moved his troops to a safe location and the JTAC gave the B-1 crew the okay to drop.

Getting a final safety check from airborne and ground assets, the crew commenced their bomb run.

"Training really does take over and time slows down," said Capt. Robinson, the pilot of the mission. "You double and triple check everything. As a crew, you make sure your coordination is tip top. It's great to know that in about five seconds when the clock runs out, the bad guys are going to die and the good guys will be okay."

Seconds later the bomber

released three of its 2,000-pound guided munitions and the JTAC confirmed destruction of the enemy forces with an emphatic 'good hits' call.

The 1st Army Brigade Air Liaison Officer recognized the effort expended by the crew during the marathon mission.

"They did an outstanding job under difficult conditions," the ALO said in an email to the crew. Their actions helped to save the lives of the men I work with on a daily basis and avenged two of our soldiers who were killed in (previous) fighting."

Captain Robinson said that winning the Gen. LeMay Award is a reflection on Team Dyess and the training that B-1 crewmembers have received through the 28th Bomb Squadron.

"We made a significant impact on the global war on terror," Maj. Nichols said. "The award was great. But, we're just happy we could do our job."

The Air Force Association is an independent, nonprofit, civilian organization promoting public understanding of aerospace power and the pivotal role it plays in the security of the nation.

Each year the Air Force Association honors the outstanding achievements of men and women throughout the United States Air Force, government, academia and the aerospace industry.

(Capt. David May contributed to this story).